

# **Warwick Town Centre Plan - Options**

## **Options**

### **Introduction**

Warwick town centre has architectural and historic distinction, serves 30,000 residents, is the focus of a thriving economy and attracts visitors to the castle from all over the world. Whilst it is important that we recognise the role Warwick has to play as a historic town, attractive to residents, people who work here and visitors, we want it to develop and thrive in the future. We are therefore preparing a plan to ensure that any future changes to the town centre are an improvement.

You may recall that in 2010, we asked you about the key issues facing the town centre of Warwick and you may have responded giving us your views. We are now asking you about *how* we should address the key issues identified during that consultation. The Key Issues are grouped under the following headings:

- Historic Buildings, Parks and Open Spaces
- Economy

- Traffic, Air Quality and Climate Change
- Development Opportunities
- Marketing the Town Centre

We have carefully examined all the issues raised in our previous consultation. We have not been able to provide options to address all of those issues, but we have suggested those that have been identified in the following pages and are seeking your views. Do you agree that the options will address the key issues? Are there any options that we have missed?

Please complete the appropriate section of the accompanying questionnaire, online ([www.warwicktowncentreplan.org](http://www.warwicktowncentreplan.org)) or pick up a separate paper copy to complete.

Alternatively, email us ([ldf@warwickdc.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@warwickdc.gov.uk)) or write with your views and ideas to the following address: Warwick Town Centre Partnership, % Development Services, Warwick District Council, Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5QH

We will explore further your favoured options, develop them into a preferred option which we will ask you about again and then into the final plan which will form the basis for change in the town centre over the next fifteen years

### **Partners:**

Warwick District Council; Warwickshire County Council; Warwick Town Council; Warwick Chamber of Trade; Warwick Society

### **The Vision for Warwick Town Centre:**

We have considered carefully what kind of town centre Warwick should have and propose the following vision:

***"To achieve economic and social success by building on Warwick's distinctive architectural and cultural strengths"***

We published a map in the 'issues' paper defining the town centre and asked if you agreed with the boundary. We will discuss this with you again at the next stage of consultation.



### **Historic Buildings, Parks and Open Spaces**

#### **What you told us at the last consultation**

Protecting historic buildings and enhancing parks and open spaces were ranked as the most important issue for the plan to deal with

Also

- Historic buildings should be protected but also used
- Street scenes should be protected
- New buildings should be sympathetic to their historic environment
- Parks and open spaces are well maintained on the whole and wish their individual characters should be retained
- More shelters, seating and facilities should be provided in parks

- The town centre area contains over 300 listed buildings, including a number of Grade I listed buildings and scheduled monuments
- Most of the town centre is designated as a Conservation Area

One of the town centre's key strengths lies in its historic buildings, parks and open spaces. These attract many residents, visitors and employers to the town centre who in turn, support the local economy. It is vitally important to

maintain and enhance these features to ensure they remain attractive.

Development here must enhance the historic environment. To do so however, needs careful consideration and an understanding of good design. It is possible to mix old buildings and vistas with contemporary design, but this needs to be sensitively done.

### **What do we want to achieve through the Plan?**

Our objectives are to:

- Protect, maintain and enhance historic buildings, parks and open spaces
- Ensure that historic views and street patterns are enhanced as part of any new development in the town centre. Views into and out of the town centre should be exploited and created where possible, with enclosure contrasting with openness
- Require new buildings to respect the scale and height of the historic buildings by using appropriate and sympathetic forms and materials to enhance the historic environment
- Ensure that the public realm, spaces between buildings in the town centre, parks and open spaces should be well designed for all users
- Ensure that where historic buildings are restored and

re-used, the original use is taken into account in deciding what new uses and changes in fabric are appropriate

- Improve, maintain and make accessible to all our parks and open spaces

There are some things that we would like to do anyway. These are:

### **Actions**

The following actions are proposed:

- Assess buildings, historic and modern, with a view to suggesting them as potential Listed Buildings with English Heritage or, in the appropriate circumstances, the de-listing of Listed Buildings which no longer fulfil the required criteria. Request that English Heritage resurvey Warwick as this hasn't been carried out since 1971
- Produce a Conservation Management plan and design standards for future development
- Assess whether there are parks and open spaces which meet the criteria for Green Pennant or Green Heritage site accreditation and apply for such

designation if they do so

- Ensure that developer contributions are directed toward environmental improvements that will assist integration with the existing town centre
- Link existing open spaces and parks across the town. By linking streets, buildings and open spaces, legible pedestrian routes will be established giving easier access to, from and within the town centre and to buildings and public transport

### **Options**

Going beyond these actions, should we:

- Introduce greater control over changes property owners can make to their buildings in the Conservation Area to provide more protection to unlisted buildings which enhance its character by introducing an Article 4 direction
- Assist residents to establish a trust to source funding streams for the renovation of historic buildings requiring work to bring them back into a suitable use and include renewable energy measures where appropriate, in such renovation projects
- Prioritise resources for maintenance and

improvements to our existing parks and open spaces, including church yards and burial grounds and to encourage use of parks and open spaces by residents and visitors. Ensure that the character of these spaces is preserved and historic references retained

- Do nothing else

What do you think of these options?

Each park has its own particular character, whether it is the family attractions of St Nicholas Park or the less structured and more natural setting of Priory Park. Warwick Castle Park is in private ownership and has recently changed hands, so we are keen to work with the new owner on the future use and management of the Park.



**Economy**

### **What you told us at the last consultation**

- Warwick should not try to compete with Leamington Spa, but more shops are needed to provide every day provisions for local people
- Employment opportunities should be welcomed, but offices are not key alone to a successful economy and buildings in the town centre are suitable for some office uses. A variety of businesses is required
- The numbers of cafes and restaurants in the town centre was considered by a substantial majority to be sufficient and by over half of respondents to be excessive. Fewer than one in five thought that there should be more
- Providing more visitor attractions and accommodation was given quite a low priority as an issue
- There are significant opportunities for mixed use

### developments

- The relationship between the castle and the town centre was ranked highly as a key issue for the plan
- The relationship between the racecourse and the town centre was ranked as a less significant issue
- Maintain a safe and sophisticated evening economy

Warwick has a strong economy: in the town centre, office, employment, residential use, education and retail are all important, the last being predominantly independent businesses catering for the local catchment and the thousands of visitors who enjoy the town's castle and historic character every year. Previous planning policies have encouraged both residential use and an influx of cafes, pubs and restaurants contributing to a strong leisure offer and a busy evening economy, but weakening the daytime retail attractiveness of the town centre

In addition, high-value professional services are a vital part of Warwick's economy, attracted to the town centre by its architecture, skills base and transport links.

The county council is the town centres largest employer with 400 staff based in Shire Hall alone. The prestigious Warwick Schools Foundation occupies two large sites. Elsewhere in the town, major employers include Warwick Hospital, Volvo and National Grid.

These elements combine to create a vital and viable town centre but the current economic climate poses significant threats. The town's daytime retail offer is limited and both residents and visitors expect a greater range of shops. There are few ground floor vacancies but changes occur frequently and upper floor offices, particularly in historic buildings, are sometimes difficult to let. It is essential therefore that the Town Centre Plan helps to improve Warwick's economic resilience and its appeal to businesses, residents and visitors.

### **What do we want to achieve through the Plan?**

Our objectives are to:

- Improve the mix of shops and services to meet local residents' needs and satisfy visitors' expectations
- Help ensure a range of premises are available to meet the needs of desirable businesses
- Improve the vitality and attractiveness of the town centre to support existing businesses and encourage investment
- Strengthen the town centre's relationship with the castle, racecourse and the town's businesses and its attractions

- Ensure that there is sufficient high quality visitor accommodation available in the town centre

### **Options**

Should we:

- Increase the number of retail units through new developments to match retailer and customer demand
- Target specific types of niche national retailers which can be accommodated within smaller retail units and complement the town's independents
- Increase the amount and range of visitor accommodation to give visitors more choice
- Focus on supporting and attracting independent businesses to differentiate Warwick from other towns
- Encourage a particular range of niche business that meet local and visitors' needs and that Warwick can become renowned and visited for
- Zone particular streets of the town centre for retail areas, café/restaurant areas etc. and control changes of use of buildings within these areas to

## **APPENDIX A**

- Promote the development of a small town centre cinema
- Offer incentives to attract businesses e.g. parking and business rate flexibility
- Help deliver additional attractions to encourage more visitors to come into the town and satisfy their expectations
- Encourage and support events and festivals that increase vitality
- Do nothing else

How would you prioritise these options?



those specific uses, *or*

- Provide greater flexibility for buildings to change use to other commercial uses and allow market forces to dictate patterns of use

### **Transport, Air Quality and Climate Change**

### **What you told us at the last consultation**

Reducing the impact of traffic on the town centre was ranked very highly by respondents as a key issue for the plan to deal with.

- Problem of traffic using town as a 'through' route
- Park and Ride scheme needed for school children and commuters
- One way system needed
- Deliveries cause problems
- More pedestrianisation needed
- Perception that there is a lack of appropriate quality parking
- Additional bus services needed
- We should be making Warwick a good example of a sustainable, low carbon town and promote it as such.

Climate change is an overarching issue which affects everyone. The final plan will comply with the policies contained in the Local Plan in dealing with this issue.

About 80% of the vehicles entering and leaving Warwick town centre are through traffic. This through traffic is the predominant source of air and noise pollution in the town centre streets and is the cause of peak hour congestion. The levels of traffic passing through the town centre results in sections of the town experiencing severance, impacting the economy. Other modes of transport such as walking and cycling are under-utilised as people experience intimidation and safety risks due to the dominance of the vehicles.

Inextricably linked with this traffic issue is that of climate change. Climate change is an international, national and local issue. On the face of it, one small town could have little impact on the global problem of climate change, but we all need to take responsibility for reducing the impact we make individually and collectively.

New development can provide a potential source of money to make improvements, along with bidding for funds from other sources. However we will still need to prioritise the options we take forward in the plan to deal with these issues.



### **Actions**

The following actions are proposed

- Prepare guidance for property owners on how to fit renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency measures in Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings
- Reduce the energy consumption of public buildings within the town centre. A target could be set to improve the energy performance of these buildings up to a higher efficiency level
- Build on campaigns to encourage change and ensure buildings are made as energy efficient as possible
- Require all new development to meet the standards set out in the emerging Local Plan in relation to targets for renewable and low carbon energy technologies, energy efficiency and sustainable drainage
- Secure additional developer contributions to fund alternative schemes if renewable and low carbon energy requirements cannot be met on site
- Promote the construction of zero carbon buildings

### **What do we want to achieve through the Plan?**

Our objectives are to:

- Reduce the amount of traffic passing through Warwick town centre
- Prioritise streets for walking and cycling on existing roads and improve access by sustainable modes to the town centre for all
- Improve air quality by reducing nitrogen dioxide levels to a safer level whereby the AQMAs could be deleted
- Adapt the town to address the causes and impacts of climate change

There are some things that we would like to do anyway.

These are:

### **Options**

Beyond these actions, should we:

- Adopt road user charging to reduce traffic volume, targeting through traffic
- Introduce more pedestrianisation and/or specific

### loading times for deliveries

- Invest in cycling, identify gaps in the existing cycle network and connect routes to the railway station
- Invest in walking and identify gaps in the existing pedestrian routes to connect outlying parts of the town and the railway station with the town centre
- Work with bus operators to increase service reliability, frequency and journey times for buses
- Introduce 'virtual' park and ride
- Work with taxi operators to improve access for taxis
- Work with rail operators to increase the frequency of trains and improve the station and timetable information
- Improve the quality of car parks and increase usage with safer access and consistent pricing
- Work toward offering some town centre office car parking to the public during the week and erecting appropriate signage
- Require new development to produce and implement green travel plans
- Improve information to advise of sustainable travel

### options

- Fit renewable and low carbon technologies to existing public buildings providing an opportunity to sell back to the national grid, energy that is produced in excess of what is used
- Reduce energy demand for existing buildings with grants utilising money obtained by selling energy back to the grid
- Use income from 'Feed in Tariffs' and contributions from new developments, to finance renewable energy projects to serve the whole town
- Shape the development of the town centre economy so that a higher proportion of everyday local needs are met by it, reducing the demand for transport; and by this local focus reducing dependence on visitors, thus also reducing transport demand.
- Do nothing else

### **Development Opportunities:**

When we consulted you on the issues, we suggested that there may be some opportunities to develop some of the

land and/or buildings which are largely publically owned. We have identified a number of opportunities that could come forward as a result of changes to the way in which the public bodies work and where their services are located. As there are a wide range of possible alternative uses, we would like to assess these opportunities to ascertain what uses could be viable for each. We have therefore begun this work and we will be able to show you the range of uses most likely to be appropriate for each site and ask for your view at the next stage.

In the meantime, if you have a suggestion for a building which you think could be better utilised or a site that could be redeveloped to improve the town centre, please let us know. You can add this to the questionnaire or email or write to us separately. Please give all the details you can, including location, postal address if possible, current use and ownership if known and your suggestions for a new use.

### **Marketing the Town Centre**

There are a number of marketing issues that the Warwick Town Centre Management Group will be dealing with. They are included here for completeness and to give a flavour of what is happening on a day-to-day basis in the town centre to ensure that Warwick is promoted to local people and visitors in a positive way, encouraging everyone to use its facilities and recognising what it has to offer.

- Provide better and more co-ordinated promotion of the town's businesses and attractions
- Strengthen the relationship between the town centre and the castle and racecourse
- Support markets and events that increase vitality, footfall and trade
- Positively promote the town centre to potential businesses and investors

## **APPENDIX A**

**Article 4 Direction** – greater control is gained by issuing an article 4 direction over the changes that owners can make to their buildings to provide more protection to the character of a Conservation Area and its unlisted buildings e.g. in Leamington, buildings in the town centre are restricted in the paint colour used on external walls.

**AQMA** – Air Quality Management Area. Where air quality does not meet health standards, local authorities are required to develop action plans to try to meet the objectives. In Warwick the main source of air pollution is road traffic emissions resulting in certain areas having high levels of oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>/NO<sub>2</sub>).

**Feed in tariff** – a scheme whereby people receive payment for generating their own 'green' electricity.

**Green Pennant** - The award is part of the Green Flag Award scheme, and recognises high quality green spaces managed by voluntary and community groups.

**Green Heritage** - Accreditation is given in recognition of achieving the required standard in the management and interpretation of a site with local or national historic importance.

**Green travel plans** – employers encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking or introduce benefits to car sharers.

## **GLOSSARY**

**Renewable energy** – energy flows that occur naturally and continuously in the environment, such as energy from the sun, wind, water, waves or tides.

**Sustainable drainage** - an approach to managing rainfall in development that replicates natural drainage. Runoff is collected and stored to allow natural cleaning to occur prior to infiltration or controlled release to watercourses, reducing flood risk.

**'Virtual' park and ride** – bus services increase in frequency and more specifically, serve existing car parks on the periphery of the town

**Warwick Town Centre Management Group** – comprises representatives from Warwick District Council, Warwick Town Council, Warwickshire County Council, Warwick Chamber of Trade, Smith Street Traders Association, Warwick Castle, Warwick Racecourse, St Mary's Church, Warwickshire Police

**Zero carbon buildings** - achieved by ensuring an energy efficient approach to building design, reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on-site through low and zero carbon technologies and connected heat networks.